



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
January 18th, 2011**

I. Call to Order & Introductions: Bill Gray, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Bill asked for all present to please stand for a moment of silence for all of those who have given their lives and those who have been wounded for our country in the different conflicts in which our country has been engaged in and to remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Approval of Minutes: Bill Gray, Chair, made several edits to the December Meeting Summary Minutes: include Veterans Integrated Service Network for acronym VISN 5; change Silver Spring Vet Center (SSVC) to Silver Spring Civic Building (SSCB); and the Winterhaven Stand Down is being held January 22nd, not January 15th. Rich Fales made a motion to approve the minutes with the edits. Jane McCarthy seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the December Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved with the edits. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. Update on State-wide Efforts to Establish a Specialty Court for Veterans – Jerry Boden, Chief of Staff, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA)

Mr. Boden explained there were ongoing discussions between the MDVA, the Judicial Branch, and several other state agencies to explore the viability of instituting a Veterans Court in Maryland. Several years ago, Adjutant General James Adkins, former Secretary of Veterans Affairs contacted the Maryland State Bar Association to initiate these discussions with the Military Law Committee (MLC). The following individuals with the MLC are heavily involved: Judge Jamey Hueston, District Court Judge in Baltimore City; Judge Frederic Smalkin, Law Professor with University of Maryland and Brigadier General in the Maryland Defense Force; and Charles Blomquist, Chair of MLC and Baltimore City Prosecutor. Also involved are Patricia Lane, Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist for VA Maryland Health Care System; several VA Homeless Outreach Coordinators; Tamara Bream, Special Assistant, Maryland Department of Public Safety/Correctional Services; and Susan Steinberg, Director of Forensic Services, Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DHMH).

Mr. Boden explained that it is the common view of the Judicial Branch that there is not enough data available to justify the expense and organizational time that would go into developing a specialty court. They would first like to create a sense of awareness of veterans issues and educate judges and probation officers about veterans in general.

In March, 2010, approximately 50 judges participated in a 3-hour continuing education course that instructed them on veterans issues. The training included a presentation from an officer in charge of the National Guard's Reintegration Program. Colonel Gaffney gave a presentation featuring videos that explained what issues service men and women are facing during combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. DHMH gave a presentation on veteran specific behavioral and psychological issues. VA personnel spoke about services available to veterans who are at risk of being incarcerated or are already incarcerated.

Two bills relating to Veterans Treatment Courts were introduced during the last Maryland General Assembly session. Delegate Burns introduced a bill for a Veterans Treatment Court Pilot Program to be established in Baltimore County. Senator Peters introduced a bill for a Veterans Treatment Court Pilot Program to be established in Wicomico, Frederick, and Prince George's Counties. Both bills were voted down. A judge who testified against the bill said the judicial branch is not ready to take on a Veterans Court, but they are open to the idea of studying the issue. A bill was also introduced to create a Task Force on Military Service Members, Veterans, and Courts, but it was also voted down.

Currently, there is no data in the State of Maryland that details how many individuals in jail or in the judicial system are veterans. This type of data is necessary to prove there is a need for a Veterans Treatment Court and until this data is acquired they cannot move forward with legislation. Betsy Luecking, Staff, noted that the County's Department of Health & Human Services added a question to their intake forms last year: "Have you or an immediate family member ever served in the U.S Armed Forces, National Guard or Reserves?" When the Commission met with the Department of Corrections in March, 2010, they were not asking new inmates if they are a veteran. It is hoped that they will begin doing that this year. The Commission developed a survey to be given to newly incarcerated individuals to inquire about their military status.

There are currently 20 States throughout the country that have a Veterans Court, with the most notable program being in Buffalo, NY. Roland Kauffman, Commissioner, referred Mr. Boden to an article about Veterans courts titled "[Veterans Court, California Style](#)" in the September/October 2010 Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) Veteran Magazine.

MDVA will continue to support the ongoing discussion of creating a Veterans Court. Mr. Boden will share feedback received from Commissioners with the MLC.

IV. Update on Veterans Collaborative, Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner

Rich reminded Commissioners that the next Veterans Collaborative meeting will be held Wednesday, January 19th from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Core Services Agency, 751 Twinbrook Parkway, Rockville.

The VA recently met with the County's Crisis Center to discuss tele-mental health services. The VA is concerned about the need for having psychiatrists available for two hours a week at the Crisis Center. The VA has instead proposed a pilot program that will allow Ken Barnum, VA Homeless Outreach Worker, a Vet Center worker and a Veterans Justice Outreach Specialist to each work several hours at the Crisis Center. The County will collect data regarding the number of veterans who use these services. The data will help to establish a need and further the discussion for tele-mental health services.

The County is still working on a Memorandum of Understanding with the VA.

V. Chair and Vice Chair Report – Bill Gray and Jerry Godwin

Bill Gray was invited by Colonel Harvey Kaplan to speak about the Commission at the monthly meeting of the Military Officers Association of America on February 16th. It will be held at Manor Country Club and the luncheon will cost \$20. Interested Commissioners can contact Bill at billgray4vets@verizon.net for more information.

VI. Unfinished Business

Rotating Veterans Display at Civic Center and Libraries

Betsy Luecking, Staff, will work with Rich Schiffauer, Commissioner, on developing a records inventory database so they can start to collect donated and loaned items to be displayed. Betsy will contact David Dise, Director, Department of General Services, about storing these items.

VII. New Business

Planning for 2011 Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day – March 30, 2011

March 30, 2009, Congress proclaimed a national Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day and encouraged the people of the United States to observe this day with ceremonies and activities that promote awareness of the numerous contributions of veterans who served in Vietnam and the importance of helping all of America's veterans return home and achieve happy, healthy, and productive lives. Last year, the County Executive and the County Council presented a proclamation to Bill Gray, Chair, and other Vietnam veterans.

Sharon Hodge, Commissioner, has been assisting Bill Gray in the planning of a Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day event to be held Wednesday, March 30th. The Commission would like to invite as many Vietnam Veterans as possible to attend. Bill asked Commissioners for contact information for organizations they belong to so he can send them an invitation to be sent to their members.

Betsy Luecking will try to book a room at the Silver Spring Civic Building. A reception will be held in the evening from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Jane McCarthy suggested having a panel discussion featuring Vietnam veterans. Mike Subin, Commissioner, suggested that County Executive Leggett be invited to participate as a panelist. This panel will be held from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Jane will Chair a Planning Committee that will develop a program. Interested Commissioners can meet to plan for the event prior to the February 15th meeting from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville in the 1st Floor Tan Conference Room. Jane will Chair this committee.

VIII. Briefing on Tanks Used in World War II – Dee Paris, Veteran of the Battle of the Bulge:

Dee gave a very insightful perspective on World War II, on how tanks were created to be used in World War II and his experiences as an officer in the Battle of the Bulge. He was responsible for 24 persons under him.

- The Battle of the Bulge was the final great German offensive of the war.
- The battle was the largest land battle of the war in which the U.S. participated.
- Over 81,000 Americans and 100,000 Germans died by the end of the battle.
- The execution of 86 American POWs by a German SS unit on December 17 rekindled the American war effort.

IX: Announcements:

Betsy Luecking, Staff, was contacted by Navy Commander Chris Thomas, Executive Office of the President, White House, for assistance in locating military families that needed assistance as a community service project to take place on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Commander Thomas is interested in working on more projects in the spring, including providing repairs at a women's shelter in Montgomery County. Rebuilding Together has already committed to purchasing supplies for that project. Commissioners were asked how they would like to be involved with

these types of projects in the future. Information regarding the individuals involved with these projects will remain private and confidential.

Lorrie Knight-Major, Commissioner, asked for volunteers to assist in editing resumes of veterans who are enrolled in an Easter Seals employment program. There are currently 60 people enrolled in the program and 70% of them need assistance with their resumes. Volunteers will need to sign a confidentiality statement.

The National Association of Counties (NACO) is recognizing April as Veterans month. Betsy Luecking referred Commissioners to an article written in NACO titled "[County-run Veterans Service Programs Also Feel Budget Pinch](#)".

The biannual meeting of [Veterans and Military Families for Progress](#) will be held Thursday, October 20th to Sunday, October 23rd at the Capital Sheraton Hotel in Arlington, VA. The theme will be educating the general public and the media on coming home issues that our veterans face as well as discussions about post-traumatic stress disorder, homelessness, and other problems.

Adjournment: 7:30 p.m.

Next Full Commission Meeting:

Tuesday, February 15th, 2011, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville in the 1st Floor Tan Conference Room.

Respectively submitted:

Carly Clem, OSC

Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison